

VZCZCXRO4754
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHRO #1637 1521425
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 011425Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4943
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY 0390
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 1447
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 7170
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 1515
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2790
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHRO/USDAO ROME IT PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001637

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA, EUR/WE AND S/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/2016

TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [IZ](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ: ITALIAN LEADERS ASSESSING ITALY'S TROOP
PRESENCE, REITERATE PLEDGE TO CONSULT WITH U.S. AND IRAQIS

REF: ROME 1625

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald P. Spogli for Reasons 1.4 (a), (b) and
(d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Italian leaders are evaluating Italy's troop presence in Iraq and seeking ways to reconcile the need to maintain a military presence for civilian force protection with the government's commitment to complete troop withdrawal. In separate discussions with Deputy FM Rutelli and Defense Minister Parisi, the Ambassador praised the positive Italian contributions to Iraqi reconstruction and emphasized the need for a continuing Italian presence. Rutelli reiterated the government's pledge to consult with the U.S. and Iraq before making any decisions on troop withdrawals. End summary.

¶2. (C) In a May 28 meeting with the Ambassador and Senator George Allen, Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Culture Rutelli said the Italian government is assessing carefully the method in which it could have an ongoing presence in Iraq. It has become apparent that a "meaningful" military force is required to maintain Italy's civilian reconstruction presence, and the GOI is reviewing this in the context of the government's program, which calls for the complete withdrawal of Italian troops in Iraq.

¶3. (C) Rutelli emphasized the GOI had not yet made a decision, and none would be made without consultations with the U.S. and Iraqis. Rutelli said that both Foreign Minister D'Alema and Defense Minister Parisi soon would travel to Iraq to consult with the Iraqis (Parisi this week, D'Alema the following week), after which the Italian government would hold internal consultations before D'Alema's June 12 meeting with Secretary Rice. Following that meeting, there would be further discussions in the Council of Ministers to reach a decision on what to propose to Parliament for the next six-month funding of the Iraqi mission. (Note. As with all of Italy's overseas mission, funding for Italy's Iraq mission, "Antica Babilonia," comes up for renewal every six months, in June and December. The GOI usually issues a decree law, which Parliament must then ratify within 30 days.)

¶4. (C) The Ambassador stressed the importance of the Italian presence in Iraq, not just to the international coalition but also for Iraqi reconstruction. Italy has made positive

contributions, including the training of over 10,000 Iraqi security forces, that go far beyond the number of Italian troops on the ground. The Ambassador added that, despite the frequently-heard commentary that Italy only counts as part of the EU, Italy's significant role in Iraq shows that this is not the case.

15. (C) The Ambassador also spoke briefly with Defense Minister Parisi at the May 29 Memorial Day service at the American Cemetery in Nettuno, where he again stressed the need for Italy's ongoing contributions in Iraq. The U.S. hopes and expects that Italy will provide a continuing civilian presence, in accordance with commitments the GOI has made to us. Parisi departed for Iraq following the ceremony.

16. (U) Senator Allen has not cleared this cable.
SPOGLI